

Penns Valley Conservation Association

www.pennsvalley.net

SPRING 2017

Rooted in Millheim

By Cyndy Engle

There's no place like home, they say, but growing up I had many "homes" in my life as an army brat. Like pebbles skipping along the top of a lake, my family hopped all over the globe. We had our toes in the sands of Hawaiian beaches, were airborne in Fort Bragg, NC, crossed many bridges over the three rivers in Pittsburgh, settled for awhile in the Catskills of the Hudson Valley at West Point, NY, went "overseas" and two miles high in Bogotá, Colombia, and then had our final tour at the headwaters of the Chesapeake Bay. I was lucky because I got to see a lot of this beautiful world. But, like all armed forces families, we always had to be ready to be transplanted and our roots never had a chance to grow deep. With this gypsy-like upbringing, I never expected to stay long at the place where I decided to go to college, but the moment I crossed over Seven Mountains for the first time, I knew I was finally, truly home.

There was something almost magical about this place nestled deep in the Central Pennsylvania mountains. Who knew that such violent actions of continents colliding along with the slow stripping of glaciers could someday produce such paradise? Flanked by two larger mountain ranges, and then divided into smaller valleys by other mountains, Penns Valley is fortunate to have crystal clear waterways that originate here in our hills, to have rich soil that took millions of years to become perfect for farming, and fresh air that blows its way through the valleys, often bringing just the right amount of precipitation and moderate temperatures to enjoy the four seasons that come and go with pleasure. It is this idyllic landscape that inspired me to pick up a camera and

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Donate to PVCA May 9th 6-7pm During Centre Gives

Since 2012, Centre Gives has been raising awareness and funds for area nonprofits in Centre County. Organizations participate in the 36-hour online fundraising campaign and compete for a chance to win a portion of the \$100,000 stretch pool and special event prizes.

PVCA will be trying for a prize this year for the very first time and we are super excited for this fun-spirited competition. Support PVCA from 6pm-7pm on Tuesday, May 9th. We are attempting to receive donations from the largest number of individuals during that hour. We feel pretty lucky to be teaming up with Elk Creek Cafe + Aleworks for this challenge and encourage you to stop by and celebrate a special Taproom Tuesday to benefit PVCA during Centre Gives. Anybody who makes a donation at Elk Creek that evening will receive a free pint!

Save the date, mark your calendars or set an alarm on your phone for 8am on May 9th until 8pm on May 10th. Check out the brand new Centre Gives website (centregives.org) now and during the campaign for real time updates on your favorite participating organizations.

PVCA would like to thank all of our 2017 members, and welcome everyone that is new to our organization this year. To renew your membership see page 3.



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View From the Chair

By Jim Pierce

Lovely Valley. Lovely Community.

This is a story about... It is compelling because...

In preparation for the Centre Gives/Spring Appeal drive these hypotheticals were posed to the congregants at the PVCA Spring Meeting. As the forty or so of us broke into groups to brainstorm responses the Aaronsburg Community Building was full with chatter and laughter. Ideas flowed, scribes scribbled, and, thankfully, nobody sang the theme song to the Brady Bunch. As summaries were read out it was no surprise that our story is compelling. What started over twenty years ago as a grassroots environmental pushback effort to a proposed limestone quarry, has matured into a unique model of community support and activity, and restoration and protection, and education and fun.

With success of course comes new challenges. The current Ten-Star Board is managing more people, projects and priorities than ever. Every month we struggle to move productively through a packed agenda in a couple of hours. It's (mostly) a good problem, prioritizing good ideas :-) with limited funds :- (and we have so far adhered to our credo of always having at least some fun while we work.

The resurgence of gung-ho committee activity has been one of the most interesting successes/challenges, as we work to channel the energy of new folks and their ideas. The recently appointed, fully assimilated, chair of the newly created Communications Committee (Team Comm-Comm), Board Member Kurt Grotz hit the bullseye when he stated "PVCA needs to work as One Organization Together and not as a Confederation of Committees with individual missions". HA! And so we shall!

Our easier-said-than-done theory is this: every committee is chaired by a Board Member who is the communicative conduit between that committee and the board. Each committee maintains two "lists": a short list of active committed planner/leaders and a longer, fluid/dynamic list of members, friends, colleagues, pets etc. that are kept informed and invited to jump in as activities precipitate. Hopefully at this point lovely reader you are thinking "self? Which committee(s) forward momentum would I like to be a part of?". The how is easy; info@pennsvalley.net or call Becky or I.

Among the nuggets of truth, mirth and beauty in this newsletter we are recognizing and appreciating the long-term selfless commitments of Marcia Case and Karen Yanak. They, and others who are transitioning from Muck Boots to house slippers, are able to confidently pass their muddy shovel, or humble cookie sheet, or mighty pen, to new volunteers because of this compelling story of community that they fostered, and that flourishes today.

A Word from the Director

By Becky Bragg

Greetings and salutations from the PVCA Director of Operations. The last four months have been an interesting time to start working for an environmental non-profit! With shifting policies and changing climates, the need for environmental education and projects has become more present than ever. As I have transitioned over the past few months from a volunteer to a staff member, I have had the opportunity to learn an incredible amount of information about our watershed, the community that thrives here and what both the organization and our constituents feel are important priorities for this valley.

I feel truly blessed to have the opportunity to use my financial management and organizational skills to work for PVCA. We have made major strides over the last few months within the organization. We're trying new platforms and learning new methods for getting our work done; there are so many amazing tools out there! And those tools are helping us to take the concerns of our community and address them efficiently and effectively.

This spring is shaping up to be a busy time for PVCA: field trips, community days, cleanups, festivals, stream projects, buffer projects, mapping projects, OH MY! I look forward to seeing new faces as well as many familiar ones at upcoming events and talking more about what is important to you and your family. We live in a beautiful place and it is inspiring to work to protect and preserve it!

PVCA's Mission and Vision

PVCA serves as a steward for the natural and cultural communities in the Upper Penns Creek Watershed. We seek to preserve and honor the agricultural roots of Penns Valley by protecting and conserving its waters, farmlands, forests, and rural heritage.

PVCA envisions an engaged community, where growth is balanced with support for healthy natural systems that foster the local economy. Our Valley has dark night skies, clear streams, healthy forests, prosperous farms, and local jobs.



Yes! I would like to help PVCA preserve and protect our beautiful region!
Enclosed are my annual, tax deductible 2017 membership dues.

About You

Name
Address
City
State Zip+4
Home Phone
Work Phone
Email

2017 Membership Dues

- \$25 - \$99 \$100 - \$249
- \$250 - \$499 \$500 +
- Send me information about Business Memberships

PVCA is a 501(c3) tax exempt organization
All memberships and contributions are tax deductible.

Pay with PayPal on our website:
www.pennsvalley.net

Or please make your check payable to "PVCA" and send to:
Penns Valley Conservation Association
PO Box 165
Aaronsburg, PA 16820

Questions?
Email us at: info@pennsvalley.net

Get more involved! Join our active members!
(Check your areas of special interest)

- Stream Improvement Publicity Crickfest Education

Building Bridges of Plastic

By Jim Pierce

One of the treasures of Penns Valley is the variety of our residents, and one of the jewels of that variety is our thriving Amish community. It is estimated that nearly one third of our residents and about one half of our agricultural community is Amish. Just as it is with schools, businesses and civic leadership, an ongoing goal of PVCA is to include the Amish Community in Our Community.

Earlier this year longtime Valley Resident and PVCA stalwart Bob Vernon took on a project that had been steaming from coffee mugs for months: to encourage the valley's Amish Farmers to recycle their agricultural (Ag) plastic instead of land-filling or burning it. Ag plastic is commonly seen in our farmscape as storage of livestock feed in long snake-like tubes, and wrapped around hay bales creating giant marshmallows. Although all of this plastic is recyclable, it is a logistical challenge since it is dirty, heavy, of little value and often has to be taken a long way to a collection point. We are fortunate to have S&S Recycling, Sam and Shem Esh in Brush Valley, who, with the help of PVCA, have set up a business to recycle all the various types of Ag Plastic. You may have seen one of the Esh's ag plastic balers, which PVCA owns, at Crickfest.

So Bob wrote up a simple flyer offering a one time free pick-up during the first two weeks of February. He then *hand delivered a flyer to every Amish dairy farmer in the watershed*, most of whom he knew through his work as a Farrier and Organic

Inspector. He knew that there would be a lot of plastic and anticipated a good response, so his next step was to set up a crew of volunteers, and a fleet of trucks/trailers.

The calls came in, the volunteers signed up, and an overwhelming project became a fun, productive, community building, educational, undeniable success. We kind of lost track statistically but figure that we collected 14 loads or about 6-7 tons of plastic from 24 farms with the help of 13 PVCA volunteers. At every stop, as the crew loaded the plastic, usually with the help of the farmer and his family, Bob would gently but pointedly explain the dangers to children and animals of dioxins from burning plastic as he demonstrated the baler. He also plugged the mission and purpose of PVCA, and described the benefits of organic farming (and offered free consulting to help the farmer become certified).

A volunteer organization like PVCA usually has many more good ideas than it has resources and energy. It is therefore all the more satisfying when a Champion like Bob takes on a project, and the rest of us rally together to make it succeed. Special thanks to all the volunteers who braved the elements, to the truck and trailer owners who let us pack them full repeatedly, to the Esh's who were suddenly inundated with way more plastic than they were prepared for at the time, and most of all to Bob Vernon for having the conviction, the tenacity, and the faith in both the Amish and the PVCA community.



Hidden Places: Chicory Lane Farm

By Catherine Smith

Chicory Lane is an old 68-acre farm lying in the Upper Penns Creek watershed east of Spring Mills and Penn Hall, north of Highway 45. A dirt lane off Brush Mountain Road reaches it. The farm's terrain, tributary streams, and soil conditions result in a wealth of varied landscapes, ecological diversity, and opportunities for education and research. To find out about public activities and access, select Events on the farm's website. (<http://chicorylane.com/events/eventsWelcome.html>)

Diversity. The farm now includes 10 different plant communities; 5 different kinds of wetlands (riparian, wet meadow, cattail marsh, old farm pond, vernal pools); a 16-acre grassland (warm- and cool- season grasses); a pollinator field; 3 kinds of forest (remnant, successional, and new), and native plant landscaping. Native plant species are released by clearing, compatible natives are introduced by planting, and invasive species are actively managed. Wildlife has increased. Woodcock, for example, lives there year-round or regularly returns to mate and raise young. To see current listings of plants and birds found there, select Database on the farm website. (<http://chicorylane.com/database>)

Education and Research. Chicory Lane is rich with learning and research opportunities. Public events vary each year according to interest and available expertise. Recent group events include native plant identification walks; bird identification walks; conservation practices field days; wetland tours; painting and drawing days. Individuals are encouraged to return for follow-up.

Aesthetics. We encourage awareness and appreciation of Chicory Lane's natural landscape. "A wetland is not a wetland is not a wetland," to paraphrase Gertrude Stein. There is not only diversity but also considerable beauty there. Every season, every day or night, at different times of

day or night, we see with fresh eyes. We encourage others to do the same. One summer day 17 artists spent time at the farm drawing and painting from their differing perspectives before exhibiting the results at the Green Drake Gallery in Millheim. One spring evening in the cattail marsh 3 musicians improvised with flute, keyboard, and percussion incorporating wildlife and weather sounds in the performance. To see farm scenes and hear farm sounds, select Gallery on the farm website. (<http://chicorylane.com/gallery/galleryWelcome.html>)

History. In 1766, in forest controlled by the Iroquois confederacy, surveyor William Maclay acting for William Penn's sons marked out a 330-acre tract "situate on the headwaters of Penns Creek" that he named Hopewell. After Indians ceded the region in 1768, Philadelphia Quaker brewer and land speculator Reuben Haines acquired Hopewell from the Penns. In 1775, a Scotch-Irish blacksmith Daniel Long acquired it and "improved" it, according to early tax records. Throughout the 1800s and into the late 1900s, Pennsylvania - German homesteaders and Penns Valley families owned and lived on it. They gradually reduced the tract's size by selling or giving



parcels to family or neighbors and by donating sites for a church as well as a German school. They timbered its woods, drained its wetlands, planted apple trees on its hillsides, and grew grain or pastured animals on its open ground. To keep fields dry or to power sawmills and fill tanning ponds, they straightened the meandering tributaries flowing from springs on Brush Mountain through the farm to Penns Creek. Sometime before 1842, they built a log home occupied since 1974 by present owners John and Catherine Smith. In 2005 farming stopped and conservation started at Chicory Lane. Since then, James Lesher has managed and maintained projects while PVCA along with federal, state, and county agencies have provided additional resources.

Remembering Marcia E. Case

By Catherine F. Smith

After 31 years in Manhattan, Marcia retired to Aaronsburg in 1996. A Pennsylvania German woman with family history in Centre and Bradford counties, she left the city to return to her rural roots. She wanted to live among the peace, quiet, prime farmland, historic buildings, neighbors, and friends in and around Haines Township. When the Aaronsburg she loved was threatened by nearby open pit limestone mining, Marcia fought with knowledge, tenacity, and wit to protect the village.

For ten years, between 2004 and 2014, she joined her neighbors, the Aaronsburg Civic Club, and attorney Steve Lachman in civil and legal actions to hold Con-Stone Inc, owner and operator

of the limestone mine, responsible for the mine's impacts on the community and the environment. (PVCA contributed to expenses and fees for these actions.) In the adjudicated settlement of a 2008 Pennsylvania Environmental Hearing Board action brought by Marcia Case, Nancy Parks, and William van den Berg, restrictions were applied to mining operation that protect historic buildings, air quality and water quality. By that agreement and follow-up actions, blasting is limited and monitored; toxic waste is no longer used in reclaiming mined areas; stone transported by truck on public roads must be covered, and mine effluent filtration ponds are better constructed, fenced, and placed outside floodplains.

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In Memoriam of Ron Temple

By Tom Doman

Ron L. Temple, dedicated PVCA supporter and a long-time friend to so many in our community, passed away peacefully on March 28 2017 at his home in Providence Point in Upper Saint Clair, Pennsylvania. He was 79 years young.

Ron is survived by his wife of 48 years, Joan Cameron Temple; son, David; granddaughter, Savannah; sister, Vivian Treivel; nephews, Bob and Warren; nieces, Sandra and Diane Kraat and devoted companion Charlie, a West Highland Terrier.

After earning two degrees at the University of Pittsburgh, Ron had a very successful career in business and finance. Beginning at Calgon Corporation and later with Ryan Homes he served in several executive positions until his retirement at age 55. Those who worked with Ron remember him for the interest he took in people and his mentoring of many colleagues in advancement of their careers.

His success in the business world notwithstanding, Ron was an avid outdoorsman. He had a love of hunting with his faithful Labrador Retrievers: Sean, Brandy, Bonnie and Sam. Ron's passion though, was for fly fishing. He spent many happy hours fly fishing on Penns Creek and with his friends at Hemlock Acres where he had his fishing camp. Love's Pool, upstream of Poe Paddy, was his favorite place on the entire stream. Ron probably forgot more about the nuances of fly fishing Penns Creek than most anglers will ever know.

Ron's affiliation with PVCA went 'way back' to the early days of the organization. He was a staunch advocate for a healthy Penns Creek watershed and for clean, cold water. His insights and counsel guided many PVCA Board members and Officers, helping them to foster a growing and respected conservation group. Ron served on the Board of Directors from 1998 through 2005 and as Vice President for several terms during those years.



In addition to his volunteer service, Ron provided substantial financial support to PVCA.

He was a self-proclaimed "dry fly addict" and tied the most exquisite dry flies for fooling the educated brown trout of Penns Creek. At Crickfest, Ron took a particular delight in conducting fly tying demonstrations. He taught young fly anglers and those young at heart the intricacies of transforming fur, feathers and steel into exact replicas of flying aquatic insects. He was most generous with his time and enthusiastic support of PVCA. Thank you for your help and inspiration, Ron.

Farewell old friend, you will be missed.

Donations to PVCA in memory of Ron will be gratefully accepted.

Remembering Marcia E. Case, cont'd from p. 6

Marcia also held Haines Township government accountable for its decisions pertaining to the mine. The Board of Supervisors heard from Marcia when, in her view, they failed to perform their duty to protect the public's "right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and aesthetic values of the environment" (*Pennsylvania Commonwealth Constitution Article 1, Section 27*). Using her skills as a former business administrator, she with others scrutinized agreements between Haines Township and the mining company; researched public records; calculated profits to the miner and losses (monetary and non-monetary) to Aaronsburg residents, and wrote detailed letters to the elected officials making good objections to bad decisions. She regularly attended township meetings.

I remember Marcia when I read the observation that "Good citizens test assumptions, question leaders, argue details, research claims" (*Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 2017).

You can read about her civic activism in Marcia's own words. You might not know that she had multiple voices. Her public voice was Marcia Case, informed and concerned citizen. A private voice was Aaron Levitas, Reporter at Large, Aaronsburg Underground. He is Marcia's reinvention of the 18th century village founder as a wry observer of 21st century township government.

Here's Marcia Case asking to publish an article in Board of Supervisors' newsletter in 2004:

"Your articles on the proposed township park . . .do not cover all the residents' issues . . .I have prepared a small article to supplement your coverage. I think this is only fair . . ."

The Board of Supervisors chair's reply:

"[Your article] represents exactly the kind of editorializing that I do not want to see in the newsletter. As soon as residents read the introduction, they will ask themselves why one resident was able to publish her

views and the same opportunity was not afforded to others. This is a dangerous precedent that will ultimately destroy the newsletter"

Here's Marcia Case in 2012 asking supervisors to reconsider the township's agreement to close Broad Road to enable mine expansion.

"I am requesting that you rescind the . . . Agreement with Con-Stone Inc. for the reasons outlined below. [Authorization and evidence for each claim provided in the original letter is omitted here to save space.]

1. The Township failed in its duty to ensure sound fiscal management.
2. The Township failed in its duty to secure the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Haines Township.
3. The supervisors failed to do due diligence in researching the impact of the Agreement on the residents.
4. The supervisors failed to do due diligence in researching the impact of the Agreement on the environment.
5. The Agreement was based on invalid information.
6. The public was given inadequate notice of the Agreement.

The supervisors' reply:

". . .The Haines Township Board of Supervisors appreciates your concerns but does not recognize any stated opinions that warrant a change to the agreement."

Here's Aaron Levitas, Aaronsburg Underground, reporting on monthly township meetings:

"At a public meeting on March 31, Haines Township residents turned out in great numbers to learn about their township supervisors' proposal for a Haines Township Park. The park would result from a land

swap with Con-Stone Inc, the local limestone mining company.

The chairman . . . started off by urging calm, and right he was to do so, as the meeting rapidly deteriorated into one huge groundswell of opposition. Over accusations of impropriety, [another] supervisor related how he nurtured the land swap idea and in January 2004 approached the quarry offering to trade a portion of township-owned Broad Road in return for a piece of quarry-owned land . . . As it turns out the proposed park is a swamp and part of it lies in another township.

[The land swap proposing supervisor] stated the reason for vacating a portion of the road was that it was ‘the worst piece of road in the township’ and has ‘three 90 degree turns making it unsafe.’ A resident in attendance stated there were many other roads in the township with 90-degree turns but apparently none of these are being offered to the quarry. It seems that residents will just have to live with them.”

While she was a persistent watchdog of the quarry, Marcia also lived fully. She was a good cook, generous host, and versatile artist in quilting, calligraphy, and gardening. She collaborated with local carpenter Elam Beiler, his barn-building sons, and his gardening wife Mary and daughters to restore and maintain her historic Aaronsburg house and flowerbeds. She filled that home with photographs, paintings, furniture, glass, and needlework by local artists and artisans. She volunteered for Aaronsburg Civic Club events. She participated in Penn State’s Osher Life Long Learning (OLLI) classes.

When Marcia died of lung cancer in 2016, Penns Valley communities in and around Aaronsburg lost a good citizen.

PVCA’s mission and vision are in line with the work that Marcia did in the world. Donations to PVCA in Marcia’s memory can be made at penns-valley.net

Thank You Karen Yanak

PVCA bids a fond farewell to Karen Yanak who is retiring from her position as database manager and bookkeeper. We thank Karen for her many years of service to PVCA and specifically to the membership committee where she served as our database manager, keeping on top of mailing labels, tax letters and so much more. She kept the system running smoothly, making entries and changes in FileMaker.

Karen also guided PVCA’s financials, serving as our bookkeeper as we made the transition from Excel spreadsheets to Quickbooks in 2010. She was very patient as the finance committee changed and tweaked the way things were formatted or described. She turned over the bookkeeping duties in November when Becky Bragg took over Accounts Payable and Receivable.

Karen’s involvement goes way back to the first years of PVCA when we applied for IRS non profit designation. She was also there when we applied for our first grant in 2000. In those days PVCA didn’t have a traditional accounting system. Tracking the organization’s finances was a time consuming task, but Karen did it all. She has been a tireless volunteer working quietly behind the scenes with no fanfare, always pleasant and willing to help wherever she could. “Unmatchable” is how one early PVCA board chairman described Karen’s contribution of time.

She and Phil have headed the “Clean the Highway” task for PVCA’s section on Route 45 for the past ten years, sometimes without additional help.

PVCA has been blessed with the dedication of volunteers and members like Karen who show such devotion to our mission and projects. These people are true strength for a small organization like ours. Thank you, Karen, for your exceptional contributions to PVCA, we are so appreciative of your time and skills!

Hedgerows: Pathways of Cooperation With Nature

By Cathy Pierce

*“The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago.
The second best time is today.”*

What do you picture in your mind when you see the word “hedgerow”? For me, it’s a solid thicket of Privet, lining the edges of the narrow country roads of Great Britain. Or, as I’d occasionally see as a child in Illinois, a long line of gnarly looking Osage Orange trees, with all manner of “weeds” and “brush” growing in amongst them, creating a sort of fence. Appearing to have had that purpose at one time, but long since neglected and degraded into what a potential property buyer would consider an opportunity to lower the offering price. Like most things in life, the true nature of the hedgerow lies somewhere between Great Britain and Illinois...

Now, you old timers can just skip the explanation forthcoming if you want. Particularly if you were never much for textbooks. But in preparing to write this article, it occurred to me that most people probably aren’t sure what a hedgerow is anymore. So here is my best shot at bringing enlightenment to those who’ve spent their lifetime wondering, “What exactly is a hedgerow?”

I suppose the simplest explanation is, a domesticated yet wild area in the landscape. The broadest definition is (and here is the textbook part) that a hedgerow consists of a long, fairly narrow arrangement of usually native, woody and herba-

ceous plants, including trees, shrubs, grasses and forbs (or flowers), and often including vines.

Hedgerows come in many forms and serve a number of different purposes. The celebrated hedgerows of Britain served as fences for livestock. The urban/suburban hedge marks a boundary and provides privacy for swimming pools and movie stars. As a response to the Dust Bowl, hedges were planted on American farms to act as wind-breaks, preventing soil erosion. Some hedges are planted simply for their ornamental value!

But hedgerows have been declining in America almost to the point of nonexistence. Their disappearance is as much a corollary of the eternal struggle of the salt of the earth versus the three martini lunch as it is a reflection of antiquated and discarded technology. Thanks in part to a pivotal change in farm policy during the Nixon Administration, many hedgerows, as well as pretty much any arable land in the U.S., were put under the plow. Agriculture Secretary Earl Butz, patron saint of the “Fast Food Nation”, envisioned a hyper-efficient, centralized food system, one that could profitably and cheaply “feed the world”. And, in 1971 as now, what agribusiness wanted was for farmers to plant lots and lots of corn and soy. Problem was, the ag policies of the day encouraged restraint. After the Great Depression — which featured the stunning confluence of huge grain surpluses, widespread hunger, and a tide of farm failures — the Roosevelt Administration



put in place mechanisms to help farmers “manage supply.”

The program that Butz inherited worked like this: When farmers began to produce too much and prices began to fall, the government would pay farmers to leave some land fallow, with the goal of pushing prices up the following season. When prices threatened to go too high, the payments would end and the land would go back into cultivation.

The government would also buy excess grain from farmers and store it. In lean years — say, when drought struck — the government would release some of that stored grain, mitigating sudden price hikes. The overall goal was to stop prices from falling too low (hurting farmers) or jumping too high (squeezing consumers). A side goal was to go easy on the land. The New Deal policy makers had seen how high-production agriculture could devastate land’s productivity. The “dust bowl” was a fresh memory.

For Butz and his agribusiness cronies, the program amounted to socialism — an intolerable check on farmers’ ability to plant and harvest as much as possible (*sarcasm intended*).

To make the policy shift palatable in the Midwest, Butz needed to convince farmers that they weren’t risking a return to Depression-era conditions: vast overproduction, low prices, and foreclosures (foreshadowing...). So he dangled the promise of foreign trade as a panacea. Don’t worry about overproduction, Butz told farmers on trips through the Midwest. Produce all you can, and we’ll sell the surplus overseas! Providing a grand example of how his vision might work, Butz engineered a massive grain sale to the Soviets in 1972. The move worked splendidly. The Soviets essentially bought up the U.S. grain reserve — just as a widespread drought hit the Midwest (womp, womp..).

With the grain reserve now far across the seas and the drought decimating the 1973 harvest, grain prices jumped and farmers scrambled to plant as much as they could to take advantage. Butz fanned their frenzy. “Plant fence row to fence row,” he bellowed from his bully pulpit. In other words, plow up and plant every bit of land you can get your tractor on. He tolerated no dissent. “Get

big or get out.” So they took on debt, buying more land, bigger machinery, more fertilizers and pesticides. I remember the 1970’s being very lucrative for my father.

Unfortunately, after this initial boom grain prices eventually began to reflect the overabundance being produced and plummeted. While farmers struggled to pay their bills and thousands lost their farms during the 1980’s, agribusiness made obscene amounts of money off the cheap grain, transforming it into such highly nutritious and desirable products as High Fructose Corn Syrup, Quarter Pounders and Chicken Nuggets. The character of the once pastoral landscapes of the Midwest was exchanged for the vast monoculture fields of Flyover Country, the place considered too monotonous to even drive through. And ironically, the people who live there, like the birds and other creatures that formerly inhabited the fields, have become marginalized and diminished. So for this Illinois farm girl, the disappearance of hedgerows is a symptom of farm policy that values profits over people, over land, and over nature itself.

Now that we understand what went wrong, what’s redeeming about hedgerows? Are they the key to saving family farms? Not exactly. But agriculture has long been and remains the dominant and most widespread interaction between humans and the environment. And hedgerows accentuate the mutual dependence which binds the farmer and indeed all of us to the land. After all, for eons before the trees were cleared and the first plow cut through the sod, nature was creating fertility from the ongoing process of life and death and seasons of both.

So this place that brings together the untamed and the civilized is central to the formation of symbiosis between the two worlds. If we merely observe the interactions of a mature hedgerow and its surrounding fields, we become aware of all the services they provide.

In addition to adding beauty and character to the landscape, hedgerows are of considerable value in helping to conserve soil. Here in Penns Valley (all the surrounding valleys for that matter) we are wide open to the prevailing westerly winds.

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Hedgerows, cont'd from p. 11

A fact we've been well aware of lately! Recall how brown the snowdrifts were last month, then consider that the snow was reflecting only a tiny fraction of the wind erosion occurring on a more or less continuous basis. Hedgerows also conserve soil by mitigating surface runoff, facilitating excess rainwater to seep into the ground and help avert flash flooding. Less runoff translates into decreased likelihood of agricultural pollutants such as manure, pesticides and herbicides flowing into streams and rivers.

Hedgerows can be very effective at regulating water supply for crop fields in several ways. By decreasing wind speed over the ground surface, hedgerows reduce water loss through evaporation. And, because of their deep roots, hedgerows not only remove water faster from the soil than crops do during periods of excessive rainfall, they can actually store water for later use. For example, a field with a hedgerow at the top collects water during rainy periods for slow release down the slope, during dry periods. This effect is greatest in soils rich in clay or organic matter.

Have you noticed yet that hedgerow contains the word "edge"? In ecology, an edge is defined as the place where two environments meet. In nature, that's where you will find the highest level of habitat and species diversity. No wonder the best hunting on the farm was traditionally along the hedgerows! They form connections between isolated patches of habitat and all manner of critters will live in and travel through these corridors. Ancillary to good hunting are the predators and pollinators attracted by the native plants of a carefully planted hedgerow. Although corn and soybeans do not require an external vector for pollination, most fruits and vegetables grown here do, including such favorites as apples, peaches, pears, raspberries, squash, melons, tomatoes, string beans, and lots more. Furthermore, pollinators rely on the shelter provided by hedgerows to travel safely and with less effort from field to field in search of nectar. Hedges also attract parasitic insects which join forces with birds to consume pests like aphids, leaf hoppers, scales, mites, whiteflies, thrips, squash bugs, stink bugs, codling moths, corn earworms and other caterpillars. Trees in

hedgerows provide nesting and perching sites for hawks and owls, whose principal prey is rodents. Each pair of raptors must catch hundreds of mice, rats and voles to successfully raise their young. Yet another group of rodent predators commonly found along hedges is snakes. Makes sense to me. Snakes are pretty edgy.

Mentioning all the plants that need pollinators reminds me; hedgerows can be sources of extra income by selecting native shrubs and trees that produce edible fruits and berries. The addition of conifers in your hedge will provide consistent shade needed for the production of mushrooms from seeded logs placed underneath.

A final benefit I'll mention is carbon sequestration. There's not much data available, but it stands to reason that over time, a hedgerow could sink a significant amount of carbon. Stunningly, the one study I was able to find comparing carbon sequestration in corn and forest land seemed to indicate that because of the application of nitrogen fertilizer, an acre of corn actually sunk more carbon than an acre of forest. However, I would not advocate for spraying forests with ammonia to help mitigate the effects of climate change any more than I would farming with chemicals.

So as I draw this diatribe to a close, there is one last aspect of hedgerows I'd like you to consider, and that is what they aren't. Agriculture is and always has been anthropocentric. Hedgerows neither conform to nor respect our notions of superiority. In their untidy appearance they stand in passive defiance, refugees in our war against nature. In our desire to subdue the wilderness and control our circumstances, we have pushed aside the natural systems and organisms that worked in harmony for millions of years to create and sustain what we now claim as manifest destiny. Knowing what we do now, and regardless of the many blessings we stand to gain, can we not find the compassion and decency to provide and restore at least a matrix for wildlife to connect with the remaining patches of habitat they need to reproduce and survive? We need to remember our humble beginnings. Despite our efforts, we do not control the forces of nature. And the modest hedgerow beckons us to accept and appreciate our reliance on the wisdom of nature, before it's too late.

Start of the Pollinator Habitat Project

The PVCA Watershed Committee planted a symbolic “first shrub” - black chokeberry at the Martin Farm Old Mountain Road wetland restoration/pollinator habitat project in Pine Creek watershed.

Pictured (l to r): Diane Mitchell Martin, Jim Pierce (PVCA president), Bill Martin, Mark Thomas (Wetland Biologist, Habitat Forever), George Kelly (Watershed Com chair emeritus), Tess Wiegand, (Watershed Com chair).



PVCA would like to thank the following businesses for sponsoring Riversongs:

Elk Creek Cafe + Aleworks (Millheim)
Creative Design & Printing (Millheim)
Nittany Lawn and Property Maintenance (Boalsburg)
Black Walnut Body Works (Bellefonte)
Trail2Creek (Millheim)
Bobbie’s Kitchen (Coburn)
Purple Lizard Maps (Centre Hall)
Bryant & Cantorna (Millheim)

Linn Realty (Bellefonte)
Commonwealth Hops (Coburn)
Envinity (State College)
Over the Moon Farm (Rebersburg)
Millheim Small Engine (Spring Mills)
Pinnacle Erosion Control (Centre Hall)
Brush Mountain Lodge (Spring Mills)
Mifflinburg Bank & Trust (Millheim)
Beloved Sunlily Designs (Coburn)

**Your contributions make our environmental education programming possible!
Thank you.**

Rooted in Millheim, cont'd from p. 1

document its beauty on a nearly daily basis for many years now ~ each day bringing a new view to light, almost as if it is born again every morning.

While these natural resources create a special haven for Penns Valley residents and visitors, its greatest asset is its people, and they're why I am so glad we chose Millheim for our kids to call home. This area is overflowing with educated, experienced, and inspiring people who also acted as our kids' mentors. Our kids had PV Ram pride in the classrooms and on the fields and courts, they were active in organizations like Boy Scouts and FFA, they looked forward to annual traditions like the Grange Fair and Dutch Fall Festival, and they worked for neighborhood businesses learning and earning. But the most important thing they were taught was to respect their environment and to never take this magnificent place they call home for granted. Even as they became adults and productive citizens of their own, Penns Valley is still ingrained in their bodies and souls.

Perhaps it was when they dropped their kayaks in Penns Creek for an afternoon float or when they cleaned the banks of Millheim's Millrace every Earth Day that the waters became like the blood that flows in their veins. Or maybe it was one of the many times they camped in Poe

Paddy or took a hike up through the Narrows to Phillips Creek when the mountains became their bones. Maybe it was one of the long bike rides that made the air their lungs, or when they tested soils in the marshes that the wetlands became their kidneys. The community gardens certainly inspired their sense of taste. There were so many instances of their interaction with the landscape here, it naturally became a part of who they are.

Our story may seem unique, but it is not. Every family in Penns Valley is fortunate to have a similar tale. Each may have a little different emphasis ~ perhaps having hunting, fishing, family cabins, raising livestock, or planting fields at the top of their list ~ but we all share the incredible gift of having a pristine natural environment where we

can grow and thrive.

We need to be careful, though. Don Henley once wrote in his song, "The Last Resort" that if you "call someplace paradise, kiss it goodbye." As the larger cities to the east and west of Penns Valley expand, and as social media freely advertises our beautiful area, Penns Valley is being newly discovered by many and becoming a destination for entertainment, business, and development. The word is out that we have great fishing and hunting available, the establishment of an art community, and wide open spaces for healthy living. They say the healthiest of trees is the one that has both deep roots and strong branches; we need to find a balance between the social and economic opportunities and be aware that what comes to us and what leaves us can have a huge impact on the natural resources that make Penns Valley so special. To create this balance effectively with long term results, we need to consider the whole world as one big backyard.

We can discuss many issues, but none of them matter if we cannot breathe clean air, drink clean water, or grow food in healthy soil. None of them. And the best way we can ensure that we have these essentials is to stand together as a nation, because unless we are all in this together, it just doesn't matter. The environment is one issue that affects us all, no matter where live. It's our common ground. Our neighbors are defined as ones who live down the street, across state lines, and over vast oceans. We need to be concerned with the guy who burns trash in his backyard as much as we are with the conglomerate that burns fossil fuels in its factory. We need to understand more about the processes of using chemicals and genetics to grow our food whether it be in a community garden or in belts of fields that stretch for thousands of acres. We need to make food security a daily conversation whether it is making sure kids have lunch at school or about protecting the land from invasive entities. We have to care if the polar ice caps are melting and potentially flooding our major cities even if we live in the comfort of the interior lands. It all matters. And while today we may seem relatively safe from many of these dangers, unless we act, and we act together as one,

we could lose all we hold near and dear.

I am not a doomsdayer. Indeed, despite the negative prospects, I am extremely optimistic. I remember when many of our cities were choking under black clouds of smog that are now much cleaner and even more prosperous. I see community learning gardens popping up in many neighborhoods where people are growing their own food with pride and safe practices. I read about schools incorporating local and seasonal foods into their lunch programs. I witness a new generation who automatically looks for recycling bins when throwing away their trash. None of these things just happened. It took a small group of people who collectively made bigger groups of people who then decided these things are important and made them priorities. They planted the seeds of change, and, with time, those roots grew strong and spread.

The Penns Valley Conservation Association is one small group that is making big things happen. It is keeping our waterways clean and healthy, helping our farmers to reduce their environmental impact while becoming more productive, creating events to keep our Main Streets busy, working with our school district to educate a new generation of environmentally-minded students, and sponsoring exciting projects like WSOV, our soon-to-be community radio station. Whether your family has lived in Penns Valley for generations or you are a newcomer to the area, the PVCA makes your life here better, today and tomorrow.

If you are a hunter, fisherman, gardener, farmer, animal lover, local business owner, Penns Valley resident or visitor, reach out and tell the PVCA about your interests and how it can serve you better. Become a member of the PVCA ~ annual memberships start at just \$25 per year. If you are already a member, make sure you are participating in the great PVCA events and bring along a nonmember to show them the fun we have. Together, we can all make a difference. It may be too ambitious to think we can change the world, but we can take care of this amazing place we are so fortunate to call home (or a home away from home). Our efforts and actions will not only preserve and conserve our natural resources, but

they will also become a guidepost for other communities, our neighbors near and wide, to show our investments pay incredible dividends for all.

Penns Valley is a wonderful place to raise a family and to have a business, a great place to put down roots. To keep those roots growing and strong, we need to nurture the environment in which they are planted. We need to recognize our roots are part of a bigger system, a bigger world with fields that grow, waters that flow, and air that blows into our valley and then moves onto others. We need to both respect and protect those roots because a tree without roots is just a piece of wood. As we celebrate Spring and Earth Day, plant a seed of your own and keep these words from Walt Whitman in mind:

“CALAMUS NO. 13 (ROOTS AND LEAVES THEMSELVES ALONE) (from *Leaves of Grass*, 1860)

Roots and leaves themselves alone are these;

Scents brought to men and women from the wild woods, and from the pond-side,

Breast-sorrel and pinks of love--fingers that wind around tighter than vines,

Gushes from the throats of birds, hid in the foliage of trees, as the sun is risen;

Breezes of land and love--breezes set from living shores out to you on the living sea--to you, O sailors!

Frost-mellow'd berries, and Third-month twigs, offer'd fresh to young persons wandering out in the fields when the winter breaks up,

Love-buds, put before you and within you, whoever you are,

Buds to be unfolded on the old terms;

If you bring the warmth of the sun to them, they will open, and bring form, color, perfume, to you;

If you become the aliment and the wet, they will become flowers, fruits, tall branches and trees.”

What's Simmering in the Stock Pot?

By Jennifer Tucker

This article assumes our readers know how to make homemade vegetable stock, beef bone or chicken bone stock. My intention is to educate or remind readers of the value in early garden weed plants we might otherwise compost; instead add them to the stockpot and strain them out at the end of cooking time...then compost! Putting the plants we label weeds into stock adds body, blood and bone-building: over-all spring tonic for strengthening the immune system and the best way to "eat local" for FREE! (besides your time and labor).

Gardens are greening up with edible weeds. These early "in season" plants strengthen bones, tone our immune system, invigorate us and wake-up our taste buds; they are healthful additions to our local spring diets. Take advantage today of young wild greens packed with nutrients. They transition us from winter into spring and summer. Get your basket and pocketknife, small spade and let's go foraging in your garden, back yard or herbicide-free fields!

Dandelions: Early roots can be eaten raw, they are sweeter in the early spring. Add them to stock, soup, stew, stir-fry or as herbal decoction; dry or roast the root. Supreme "food" for the health of liver, blood and bones. Dandelions are high in protein, calcium, vitamin A and minerals. I harvested a big bowl of dandelion greens this week by using a pocketknife to cut beneath the basal leaves, taking the crown of the root to keep all the leaves together. The taproot is left in the ground to grow another set of leaves while the deep taproot brings up minerals to feed the garden soil, too! The flower *buds* are amazing raw in salads or lightly cooked. The yellow flower *petals* pulled off the green base are sweet and delicious in salads, tea or soups!

It took me fifteen minutes to harvest a small bucket full of dandelion leaf bunches, half-hour to wash and trim, and another 20 minutes to make them into healthful food.

Recipe for dandelion leaves:

- Cook 1 cup Quinoa - 10 to 15 minutes - set aside.
- Heat olive oil in a heavy frying pan.
- Chop 3 to 5 generous handfuls of leaf bunches finely. Add to hot oil and stir as the leaves wilt. Add chopped garlic, salt, pepper and fresh herbs (optional).
- Transfer cooked dandelions to a bowl. Add a dash or two of white wine vinegar to your taste, and let it sit for a few minutes to absorb flavors.
- Stir in the warm Quinoa toss together, check for seasoning. Enjoy!!

The tender chive-like shoots of the **Wild Onions** and the young **Garlic Greens** are pungent and flavorful for soup, salads and as garnish on potatoes; add a handful to the stockpot. They help winter's gunk clean out of arteries.

Chickweed is a tiny green plant hugging the earth and a great energy boost for blood. It is delicious in soup, raw in smoothies, in pesto spread or salads. It jives up the metabolism to help shed extra



winter pounds, springtime allergies, and upper respiratory colds. Chickweed is high in calcium, potassium, ascorbic acid and minerals.

Chew some tiny slippery leaf shoots of **Yellow Dock** and **Curly Dock** for a tart lemon taste while you forage. Or graze on **French Sorrel**, a perennial vegetable in the garden. (Ask Henry to show you where to pick and eat French Sorrel leaves in the Penn's Valley Learning Garden.) The leaves are tart with a lemon sour taste. They will quench your thirst and give you a boost of natural vitamin C. Add them to salads, soups, or smoothies; sorrel awakens tastebuds.

Last but not least, *WATCH OUT!* **Stinging Nettles** is a power plant full of vitamins, minerals, proteins and iron to build muscle and energy to work... and *you will forgive them if they sting you, it's their nature.* Add them to the stockpot, soup, or teakettle but do NOT EAT THEM RAW. Always cook to neutralize the sting! Use the root and leaf in the stockpot. Nettles is one of the best examples of food as medicine; it re-invigorates, tones and balances thyroid and adrenal glands and kidney function. Combine nettle leaf and dandelion leaf and root for a tonic for liver and kidneys... spring-cleaning and rejuvenation!!

Want to learn more about those pesky "weeds" that are growing in your garden rows or more about how to inter-plant medicinal herbs in your vegetable gardens?

Or maybe you want to learn more about gardening and growing your own food?

Join us at the amazing **Penns Valley Learning Garden and Farmers Market** starting **May 6th**, every **Saturday from 10:00 to 1:00** or inquire and join our Vigorous Volunteers work-and-share or plant-a-row programs specific to the **PVLG**. Come see what we are doing this year and get involved! Food is Life!

Contact: Jennifer Tucker (jenniferanne.tucker@gmail.com) or Jim Pierce (jimpierce2015@gmail.com) to get on our mailing list of garden volunteers for spring, summer, fall work schedules. WE NEED VOLUNTEERS to continue growing the **Learning Garden...** a Penns Valley destination!

Jennifer Tucker, herbalist, artist and founder of the Medicinal garden in the PVLG.

PVCA would like to thank the following individuals and businesses for their support with various tasks including: Ag Plastic Pick Up, in-kind donations to events, assistance to our Environmental Education program, helping organize events, and more.

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Hosterman and Stover's

Elk Creek Cafe + Aleworks

Beloved Sunlily Design

Creative Design & Printing

The Centre Foundation

Freeze Thaw Cycles

Tussey Mountain Outfitters

The Feathered Hook

Karl Eric Leitzel

Penns Valley Veterinary Clinic

The IngleBean Coffee House

Triangle Organic Farm

Improving Health by Going Back to Nature

By Kelleen Lanagan

Kelleen is a 2013 Penn State graduate. She is currently finishing up her Masters of Education.

The average American child spends around seven hours a day interacting with a screen and just four to seven minutes outside exploring the possibilities of the natural world. This can lead to restlessness and even stifled creativity. Sitting in front of screens for hours a day, and having a jam-packed schedule contributes to the feeling of being overwhelmed and depressed. In recent years, the United States has seen an alarming increase in the number of youth prescriptions for ADHD medication and antidepressants. With so many diseases being the result of stress and inactivity, one way to combat many of the health problems today is simply to get up, and get outside.

Studies continue to find that being outside and in nature is linked to many mental, physical, and social health benefits in both adults and children. Getting outside and enjoying nature is a refreshing activity that people can do to recharge. It is why some go for hikes to clear their heads, and it is why many people flock to national parks over vacations. People not only desire nature when given a choice between natural and urban landscapes, we actually need it.

It is why some go for hikes to clear their heads, and it is why many people flock to national parks over vacations. People not only desire nature when given a choice between natural and urban landscapes, we actually need it.

What can nature do for physical health?

Being outdoors and engaging often with nature is a way to become active. Outdoor activity has many positive health effects. Exercise is an essential component in battling obesity, lowering blood pressure, and decreasing the risk of other weight-related health concerns. It can also im-

prove physical strength by building and training muscle, and by being outside, you are absorbing the necessary sunlight to metabolize vitamin D—a vitamin that is crucial in building strong bones. Being active outside releases endorphins, a hormone in the human body that makes you feel good.

Certain chemicals released by plants as a protection against insects can boost our immune systems when we breathe them. Trees and plants act as a natural air filter, removing carbon dioxide and other harmful compounds from the air. Air pollution is a particular problem in urban areas, and this pollution can cause or contribute to

respiratory issues like asthma. Living closer to a forest, or being around trees more often can not only alleviate the symptoms of asthma, it can increase our quality of health in general.

Aside from trees and sunlight, there are other aspects of nature that can improve health. Gardening can boost your immune system because rich soil contains mi-

crobes—tiny microscopic organisms. Some of these microbes, like *Mycobacterium vaccae*, have been found to have a similar effect on the human brain as antidepressant medications. Gardening decreases the level of cortisol in your brain, which is a hormone that is involved in responding to stress. The Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture reported that adolescents engaging in a therapeutic gardening program noticed that their self-esteem grew, and they became better at handling emotional and behavioral stressors. Many of the participants expressed their desire to continue gardening after the program ended.



How can nature help our mental and social health?

Exploring nature is a great way to relieve stress. Even just going for a walk around a park can have a calming effect on the mind. Our natural curiosity as humans draws us to the outdoors, and this exploration is key to fostering a healthy imagination. Imagination can increase creativity and positive thinking, both of which are important for keeping an active and healthy mind.

There is something about the “great outdoors” that continues to inspire creativity in everyone from painters and writers, to scientists and engineers. Plants have a calming effect on our minds that has been found to increase the speed and accuracy with which we do tasks. Having plants in the office or classroom can increase memory retention and task performance. Schools that have adopted environmental education programs have observed an increase in testing scores, while workplaces that have gardens for employees to visit during breaks see an increase in productivity.

As more people become involved with nature programs and outdoor activities, getting outside could increase the time we spend socializing with others. When many people are involved with nature, it also becomes an opportunity to enhance social connections and forge lasting friendships.

What can you do?

If you have ever felt overwhelmed by work, studies, or the bustle of a tight schedule, it may seem counterintuitive, but take a break. Go explore. Take time for yourself and remind yourself what it means to be outside connecting with nature and the people in it. One way to do this is by checking out local parks and environmental organizations for events

Events are a wonderful way to get that first foot out the door and to become part of a community of people who love being outside. The key to a happier and healthier life could in fact be your own back yard. Getting out into nature not only improves health and relationships with the community, it allows us to reconnect with a part of our very own nature.

Check out events at Clearwater Conservancy:

<http://www.clearwaterconservancy.org/events/>

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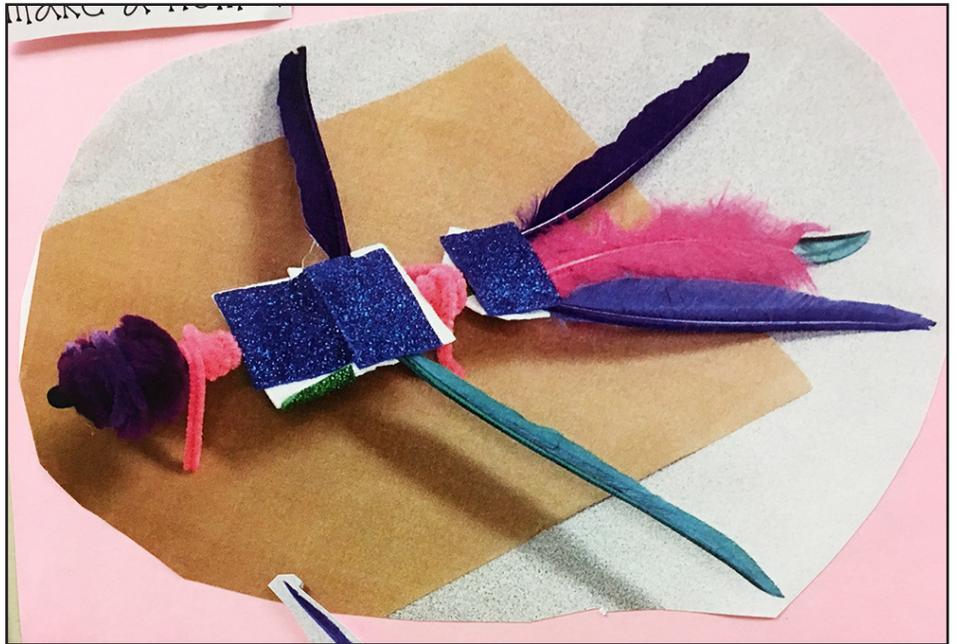
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[Thank you to ClearWater Conservancy for allowing us to reprint this article.](#)

Build a Species Project

The Build a Species Project is designed to allow students to use their creativity. The assignment is to create and “discover” a new, unknown species. The challenge of this project is to blend fantastic creativity with reality. All designed creatures must have a life cycle and live in a habitat where the creature can get everything it needs to survive: Food, Water, Shelter, Air and Space. The rest is up to the student. The project starts as a discussion of what all living things need to survive and how real species adapt to their ecosystems. Then the students develop and draw their creature’s habitat, as well as its physical form and adaptation to the environment.

The students have dreamt up animals that live in ice, water, space, and Mars. Some fly, some



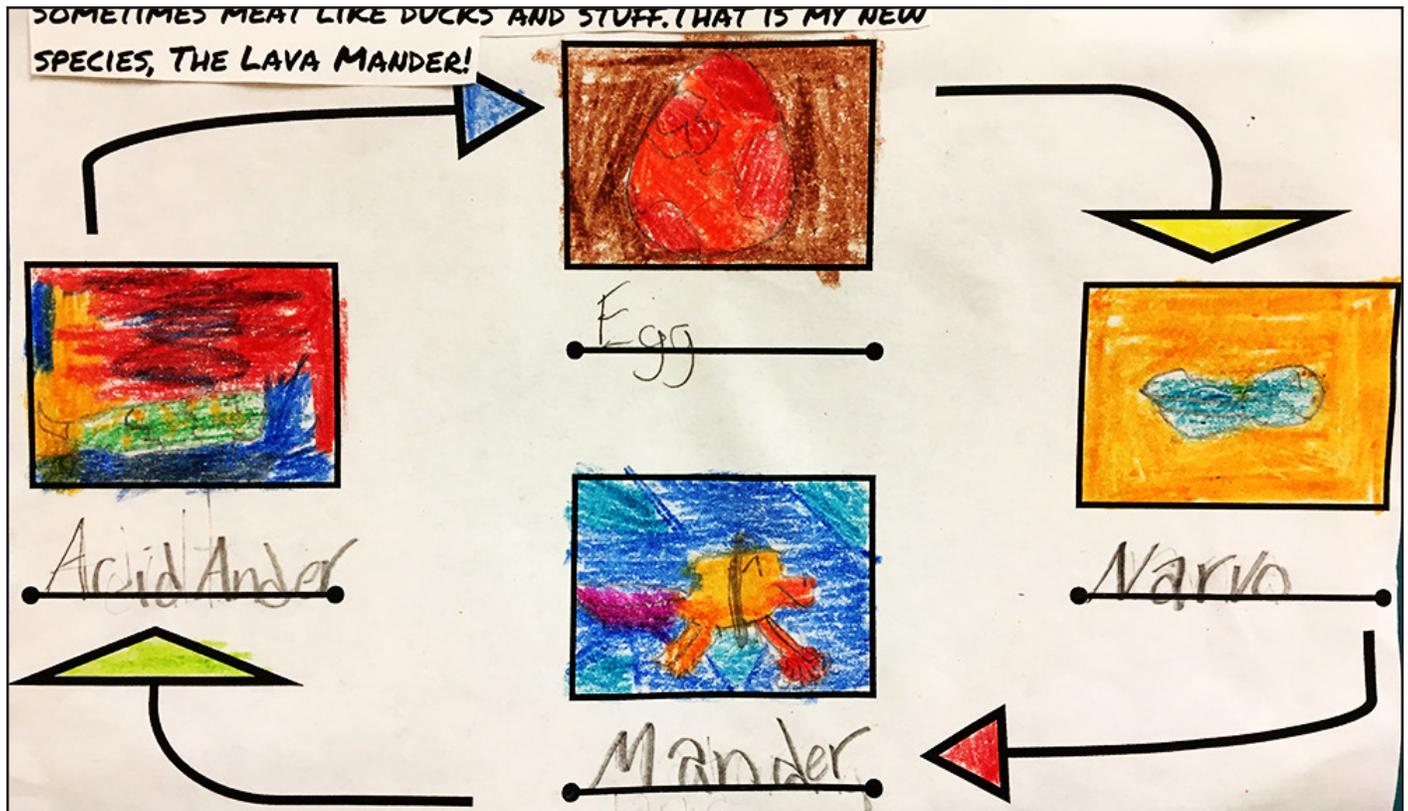
have claws, some live in extreme heat or cold. Some eat insects, some are carnivores. But all must be able to survive in their ecosystem. After the students come up with their species they are given limited materials (pom poms, feathers, pipe cleaners and popsicle sticks) to build a 3D version of their species.

We are continuously amazed at what the students dream up for their species and they always seem to fully engaged in the process. The project culminates in a story of discovery with the guidance of their teachers. The Build a Species project challenges the students to fully understand the needs of living creatures while enhancing their engagement with biology, art and writing as well as the relationships between them.





LAVA MANDER!



Lava Mander

By Maura Horner (4th Grade, Mrs. Fragassi's Class, Penns Valley Elementary)

Hi, I'm Maura and I found a new species! It's called Lava Mander, and was discovered in a volcano. It has 4 life stages.

The first stage is an egg and the colors are red, orange, green like acid, blue like ice, black like a shadow, with a lightning bolt.

It's second stage is a Narvo, in this stage the egg hatches and the new species comes out. It's like a dragon but it can't fly, it also keeps the same colors as it's egg.

The third life stage is called Mander because as

the narvo starts to grow it starts to fly, and it still has the same colors as before.

The fourth life stage is called Acid Ander because it grows into an adult and starts making acid and it also can become a shadow. It has smoky breath and smoke comes out of it's nose. It still has the lightning bolt on it's leg, but it's larger than ever before.

Now let's get on to where it lives, it lives in a volcano with acid crystals and on the top of the volcano, with thunder and lightning everywhere. It also has a dragon statue!

It eats insects, bugs, crickets and sometimes meat like ducks and stuff. That is my new species, the Lava Mander.

Spring in the Penns Valley Courtyard Garden

By Jim Flanagan

As this is being written spring has sprung, and by the time this article is published the Penns Valley Elementary Garden Project will be nearly complete and the students will be busy planting, weeding and enjoying their new garden space. The garden will include 8 raised beds, 1 raised bed cold frame, a garden tool shed and a sitting area. This project started in July 2016 as a weed covered, unkempt courtyard and by late May 2017 PVCA and Mountainside Homestead will have all Penns Valley kindergarten classes visit the garden space for field trips. The Penns Valley Elementary students with the guidance of many PVCA volunteers, helpful school administration and teachers, and PVCA and Mountainside Homestead educators have worked hard to get this space ready.

This past fall and winter students came up with a variety of garden plans including a pie garden, a rainbow garden, a food garden, and a climbing plant garden, and they are anxious to get in and plant. We are designing the space not only to be an extension of the classroom but to be a place for students and teachers to visit when they need to take a break from their day.

It has taken a lot of work to get to this point. Throughout April and May, 3rd and 4th grade Master Class Students and the PVE 1st graders were busy starting seeds using some grow lights the school district had on hand. Seed starting has been a great learning experience. The students have learned that seeds and sprouts need to be

carefully and consistently watered (there have been numerous seed/sprout casualties) and they have realized that gardening takes patience and planning. Student groups also helped build and fill the last remaining raised beds, and have moved gravel around to create a level surface.

As the structural elements of the garden finish and we get closer to turning this project into a living learning zone, we look forward to developing programs that meet the needs of the classrooms and engage students (and get them dirty). For example, it will be great to take students into the garden to identify the parts of a plant as well as see the variety of forms these parts take. We will continue to plant and will likely have some experimental plots to test what plants work best in the garden space. We also look forward to harvesting the plants and allowing the students to taste the fruits of their labor. The learning activities in the garden space are wide open and the garden will add an outdoor hands-on dimension to what students are doing in the classroom.



As the garden space is used more often, we will be able to better determine how the plots are used by the students and teachers and we will be able to work out new ideas and programs. Some ideas that the teachers, students and educators have had include creating reading nooks, butterfly houses, bird boxes and bird feeders. This has been a wonderful project to be a part of and has provided PVCA with a consistent opportunity to work with and learn from the future leaders of the Penns Valley community and we are excited about what these students will do next.

Calling for School Garden Volunteers

Looking for some way to help out PVCA? Do you enjoy gardening? We are looking for a few volunteers to help maintain the garden at the Penns Valley Elementary and Intermediate School. We hope to meet 2 or 3 mornings each summer month (June, July and August) to help keep the garden going while the students are on summer break -- all ages welcome. Please contact Jim Flanagan at pvcaeducator@pennsvalley.net if you are interested.

KIDS' CORNER! - Signs of Spring in Penns Valley

Word Search

Find these words in the puzzle on the right:

- | | |
|--------|--------|
| BIRD | BUG |
| FLOWER | KITE |
| NEST | PUDDLE |
| RAIN | SPRING |
| SUN | WIND |
| HATCH | BLOOM |
| CREEK | MAYFLY |

H	A	K	M	O	O	L	B	I	C
A	F	N	E	S	T	R	X	J	R
T	L	B	N	K	B	A	P	T	E
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D	E	D	Y	S	U	N	D	N	H
S	R	I	W	I	N	D	L	N	I
Z	K	I	T	E	D	E	E	M	Z
Q	D	L	S	P	R	I	N	G	R
M	A	Y	F	L	Y	U	O	W	F

Crossword Puzzle

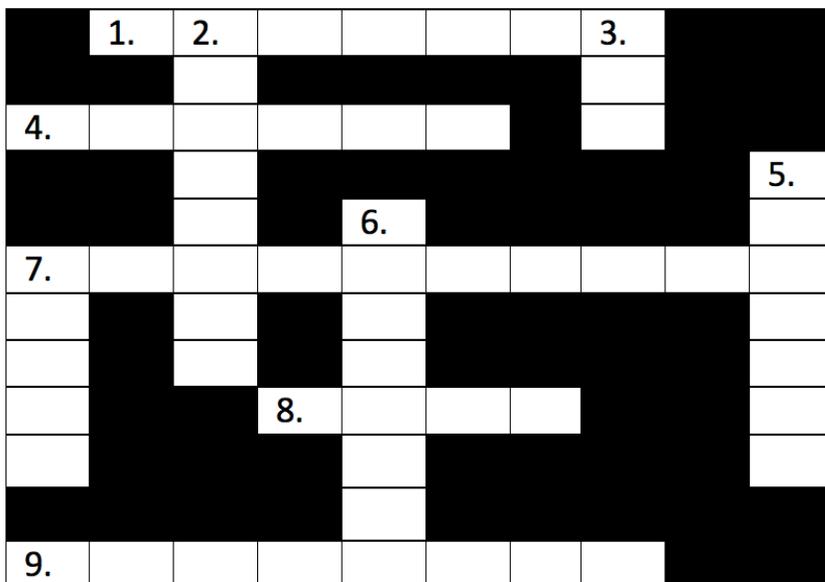
ACROSS

- The first night you hear these amphibians, you know spring has surely arrived.
- Many people in Penns Valley have a _____ and enthusiasts can't wait to get their hands dirty once the snow melts.
- Children and dogs are often seen jumping in these after a spring rain.
- As the snow and ice begin to _____ the first flowers of spring, crocuses, pop their brilliantly colored flowers through the soil.

- Best to take one of these if you find the sky looking cloudy and grey. It's always hard to predict thunderstorms in the spring and this will keep you dry.

DOWN

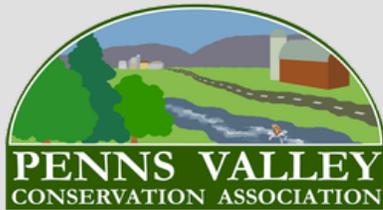
- On April 22 every year we take the day to celebrate the planet we live on and do environmentally friendly activities. This holiday is called _____.
- One of the earliest signs of spring is when the days start to get above freezing but the nights remain cool and the tree _____ flows from maples to make that sweet, yummy syrup.
- Whether you choose to do it on Penns, Pine, Sinking or Elk, this is a family and valley sport that really gets revved up in the middle of April.
- The first warm day with a burst of _____ can really help with cabin fever. A little Vitamin D never hurts to lighten the mood!
- The official start of spring, also known as the vernal equinox, happens in month of _____.





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SAVE THE DATE!

MAY 9 & 10

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GIVE WHERE YOU LIVE!

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#TapRoomTuesday Takeover
at Elk Creek Cafe
Supports PVCA
Centre Gives Fundraiser
Tuesday, May 9th
6pm-7pm



Centre gives